



## PROPOSAL WRITING 101

**PW  
101**

**THE HOW TOS OF SUCCESSFUL  
GRANTWRITING AND RELATIONSHIP  
BUILDING**

2015/2016 Participant Manual

# Welcome to Forefront

We are excited to have you with us here today. Forefront builds a vibrant social impact sector for all the people of Illinois. We are the nation's only statewide membership association for nonprofits, philanthropy, public agencies, advisors, and our allies. We provide education, advocacy, thought leadership, and project management to attract investment to the sector, develop top talent, improve systems and policies, and build organizational capacity.

Hopefully you will find today's workshop helpful in supporting your organization's mission and in fulfilling your own personal mission within Illinois' vibrant philanthropic community. We also hope you will continue participating in Forefront workshops, utilize our library services, and attend other events. Please consider us for all of your nonprofit resource and education needs.

We hope you have a great workshop!

- The Forefront Program Team

## A note about these materials:

This booklet is intended to supplement and support the information contained in the workshop presentation and is not a direct copy of the PowerPoint slides. It contains additional information, sample documents, external resources, and ample room for note taking. If you would like a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, it is available for download at the link provided on the back cover of this booklet.

## Table of Contents

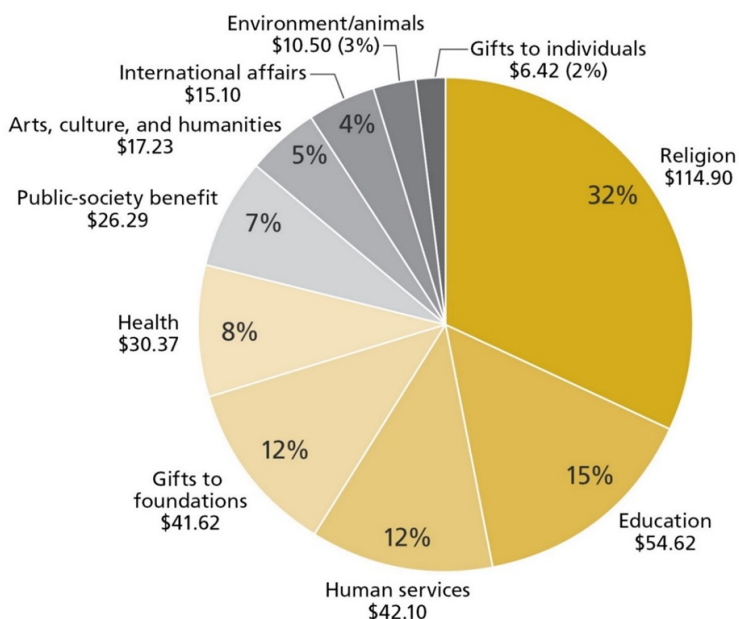
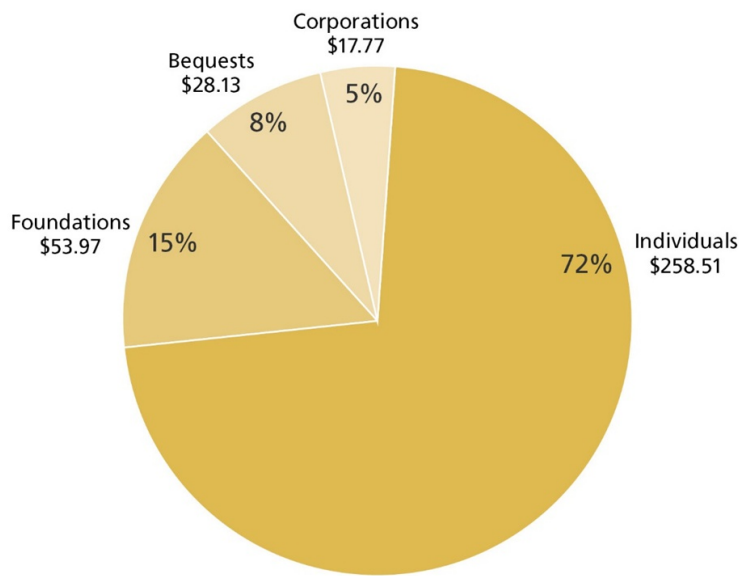
The Funding Landscape.....	3
Finding and Engaging Prospects.....	5
Funder Type Characteristics.....	6
Prospect Worksheet.....	8
Sample Letter of Inquiry.....	10
The Proposal.....	11
Sample Needs Statement.....	12
The Proposal Package.....	16
After Submitting.....	18
Other Resources.....	20
Proposal Planning Worksheet.....	21
Negotiated Ask Flowchart.....	22
Active Verbs for Grantwriting.....	23

# The Funding Landscape

Total charitable giving in America rose for the fifth consecutive year in 2014.

Total Giving Reached \$358.38 billion, a 7.1 percent increase current dollars and a 5.4 percent in inflation adjusted dollars from 2014.

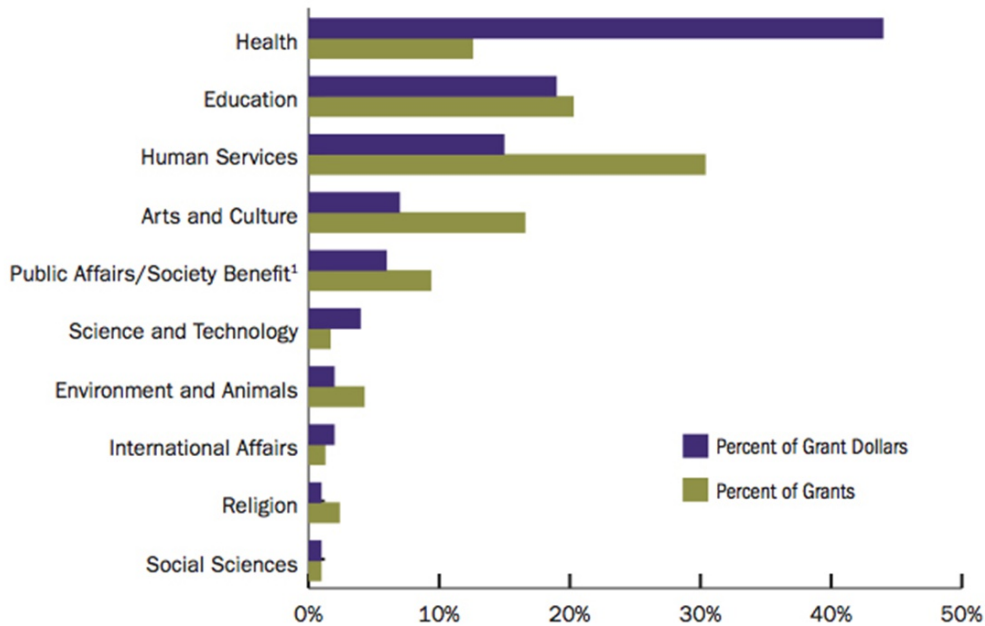
Total charitable giving has increased in current dollars every year since 1974, with the exception of the three years that we declines: 1987, 2008, and 2009. The average rate of change in total giving in current dollars since 1974 is 6.8 percent, making the rate of change between 2013 to 2014 higher than average



The average year-to-year change in total giving between 1974 and 2014 was an increase of \$8.12 billion, making the current-dollar change in total giving between 2013 and 2014 nearly three times the 40-year average.

Download the Giving USA 2015  
free report highlights and purchase other  
Giving USA products at  
[www.givingUSAreports.org/2015](http://www.givingUSAreports.org/2015)

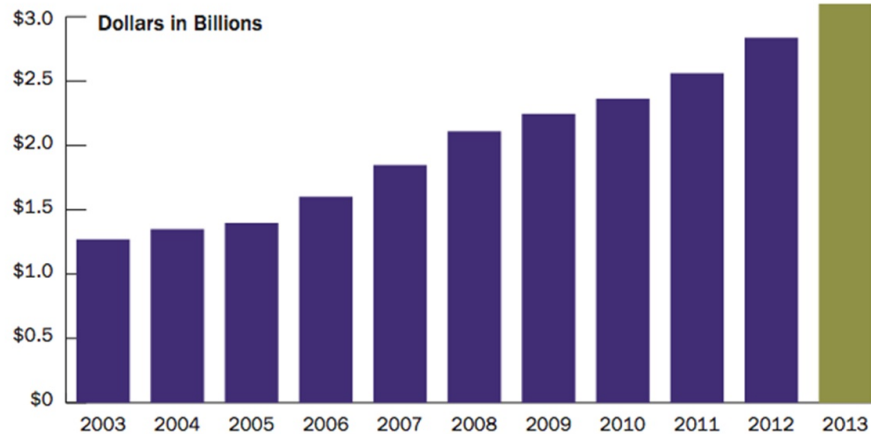
## Health, Education, and Human Services Are Top Foundation Priorities in Illinois



Despite the large share of grant dollars targeting health and education in 2013, a substantially greater share of the number of foundation grants awarded to Illinois recipients supported human services. Human services grants tend to be smaller on average than in most other areas of foundation

*SOURCE: Giving in Illinois, 2015. Based on circa 2013 grants awarded by U.S. foundations in the sample to recipient organizations in Illinois. Includes all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by a national sample of 398 larger U.S. foundations, including 46 Illinois foundations. <sup>1</sup>Includes civil rights and social action, community improvement and development, philanthropy and voluntarism, and public affairs.*

## Illinois Foundation Giving Reached a Record \$3.1 Billion in 2013



*SOURCE: Giving in Illinois, 2015. Figures based on unadjusted dollars.*

Illinois foundation giving reached a record \$3.1 billion in 2013, doubling since 2003. Adjusted for inflation, giving rose 91.4%. By comparison, giving by U.S. foundations overall rose 82% during this period. Adjusted for inflation, giving rose 44%

Download the full Giving in Illinois  
report here:  
<https://myforefront.org/GIL2015>

# Finding and Engaging Prospects

## An overview of the process:

1. Conduct preliminary research
2. Prioritize your prospects:
  - Existing Donors
  - Lapsed Donors
  - Prospects with whom you have a connection
  - "Cold" prospects
3. Conduct in-depth research
4. Try to talk with the prospect before submitting the proposal or letter of inquiry
5. Follow the guidelines

## Some things to look for in your prospect research:

1. Does the Prospect's interests match your priorities?
2. Does your organization or project meet the specifications of the Prospect's giving guidelines?
3. What is the application process?
4. What is your best way "in"?
5. What should your cultivation strategy be?
6. What are the key messages you should use to "sell" this Prospect?

## Notes

Type	Characteristics	Opportunities
<b>Independent and Community Foundations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly stated fields of interest</li> <li>Professional staff</li> <li>Decisions governed by board of trustees, with guidance from staff</li> <li>May be doing their own fundraising and programming</li> <li>Information on priorities, contact name, application procedures readily available</li> <li>Access is fairly straightforward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical assistance from professional staff</li> <li>Technical assistance, capacity building and seed money grants are more available here</li> <li>Validation in the funding community</li> </ul>
<b>Family Foundations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vehicle by which families manage their charitable giving</li> <li>Fields of interest are probably clearly stated, but may be more flexible</li> <li>May or may not have a professional staff</li> <li>Guidelines, applications forms, deadlines, etc., may or may not exist</li> <li>Decisions made by board of trustees, often composed of or guided by key family members</li> <li>Information on giving history and general interests is available for larger family foundations</li> <li>Access can be far more difficult, or easier if you happen to have the right connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some cases, should treat like individual major gift prospects</li> <li>Flexibility and quick response</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Foundations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organized to coordinate the philanthropic interests of the funding corporation</li> <li>Clearly stated fields of interest</li> <li>Professional staff</li> <li>Application forms, guidelines, deadlines all exist</li> <li>Decisions are made by a board of trustees (which probably includes corporate directors), with guidance from professional staff</li> <li>Information on priorities, contact name, application procedures readily available</li> <li>Access is fairly straightforward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easier to identify a match between donors' interest and your needs</li> <li>Professional staff can be very helpful</li> <li>Tie-in opportunities with the parent company</li> </ul>
<b>Corporations w/out Foundations (Corporate Giving Program)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donations may come from charitable budget, but may also come from public affairs or marketing budgets</li> <li>Fields of interest probably not stated independently, but closely tied to corporate mission, customer and investor relations, employee programs, personal interests of top executives...</li> <li>Giving managed by community relations, public affairs, communications or marketing staff</li> <li>Guidelines, application forms, deadlines may or may not exist</li> <li>Decision making much more staff based</li> <li>Information on giving priorities, correct contact name, may be harder to obtain and may vary depending on request</li> <li>Access can be more difficult or unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-kind contributions</li> <li>Sponsorship/cause-related marketing</li> <li>Matching gifts</li> <li>Many corporations have volunteer pools and can help with board recruitment</li> <li>Multi-tiered giving (cash, in-kind, etc.)</li> </ul>

# Notes

# Prospect Worksheet—Institutional Funders

<b>Date:</b>		
<b>Basic Information</b>		
<b>Name</b>		
<b>Address</b>		
<b>Contact Person</b>		
<b>Financial Data</b>		
<b>Total Assets</b>		
<b>Total Grants Paid</b>		
<b>Grant Ranges/Amount Needed</b>		
<b>Period of Funding/Project</b>		
<b>Is Funder a Good Match?</b>	<b>Funder</b>	<b>Your Organization</b>
<b>Subject Focus</b> (list in order of importance)	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
<b>Geographic Limits</b>		
<b>Type(s) of Support</b>		
<b>Population(s) Served</b>		
<b>Type(s) of Recipients</b>		
<b>People</b> (Officers, Donors, Trustees, Staff)		



Application Information	
Does the funder have printed guidelines/application forms?	
Initial Approach (Letter of inquiry, formal proposal)	
Deadline(s)	
Board Meeting Date(s)	
Sources of Above Information	
<input type="checkbox"/> 990-PF – Year	
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report – Year	<input type="checkbox"/> Requested <input type="checkbox"/> Received
<input type="checkbox"/> Directories/Grant Indexes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Grantmaker Web site	
<input type="checkbox"/> Foundation Directory Online	
Notes:	
Follow-up:	

## Sample Letter of Inquiry

John Hunter  
Program Officer  
Anywhere Community Foundation  
625 Smith St.  
Any City, XN 28905

Dear Mr. Hunter:

Thank you for reading this letter of inquiry to your Anywhere Community Foundation. We hope to determine your interest in receiving a full proposal for our Any City Senior Center's Women's Outreach Pilot Program. We are respectfully requesting your consideration of a grant in the amount of \$35,000.

This project is our first outreach to senior women in their homes. We are finding more and more elderly women are staying in their homes even when they cannot get out to visit facilities such as our Senior Center. We plan to provide socialization opportunities, health and wellness information, and social services when needed to women who are isolated from the community. Our pilot program fits squarely within your Foundation's areas of interest: health services for seniors in Anywhere County; increasing outreach to the home-bound elderly; and helping providers of elder services to achieve greater reach within our community.

Any City Senior Center, established in 1985, is the largest senior center in our county, serving more than 400 seniors each day at our recently remodeled facility. Our mission is to help seniors improve and maintain healthy, independent lifestyles through improvements in their quality of life. Our satisfaction rate among the elders we serve is a very high 95%, according to our latest survey. We provide nutritious lunches, social opportunities, physical exercise opportunities, and educational events throughout the year.

The senior population of our county is expected to increase by 30% over the next 20 years. Many of those seniors are expected to be at or below poverty income levels and to be mildly to seriously disabled. Some of these home-bound elders can be brought to our community center with our existing fleet of five vans that currently transport 25-35 clients each day. However, expanding the transportation system is costly and will not allow us to expand our services enough for the increased number of home-bound seniors, some of whom cannot leave their homes at all.

Consequently, we are proposing the Any City Senior Center's Women's Outreach Pilot Program to test the practicality of bringing services to individuals in their homes. We think that by using volunteers, supervised by one professional staff member (a social worker), that we can help expand the horizons of a significant number of home-bound senior women. We have limited our pilot to women because of the preponderance of single women seniors in our community. If the pilot is successful, of course, we would want to further expand our programs to include men and couples who are home-bound.

Our one-year pilot program objectives include 1) establishing once-weekly visits to 50 home-bound women; 2) recruiting 100 volunteers to make those visits on a rotating basis (many of the volunteers we expect to recruit from our current elders who visit our facility); and 3) improving the health and activity levels of those visited as measured by several available survey tools, used at pre-set intervals throughout the year.

Some of the activities that we plan to include in our home visits include cooking lessons that incorporate easy-to-prepare and nutritious food; teaching simple exercise routines suitable to each elder's physical condition; the introduction of socialization through the playing of board and card games; simple tests of mental capacities and the introduction of common methods of combating loneliness and depression, loss of memory, and lack of mental stimulation.

The total cost of our pilot program for one year is \$70,000. Half of that has already been committed from both the county government and other funders. Your investment of \$35,000 will complete the funding we need to fully implement the pilot project. Our board of directors is enthusiastic about the project, and we already have a number of volunteers who have expressed interest.

We look forward to partnering with your foundation on this exciting project. If you have any questions or would like to receive a full proposal, please feel free to contact me at 490-982-1157 (or by email at [jlikely@srcntr.org](mailto:jlikely@srcntr.org)). We deeply appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Janet B. Feelgood  
Executive Director  
Any City Senior Center

P.S. I enclose our latest annual report and catalog of activities offered at our Senior Center.

# The Proposal

## Outline of a proposal:

- I. Introduction: (Includes your request and organizational information)
- II. Problem or Needs Statement
- III. Proposed Project
  - i. Goals and Objectives
  - ii. Activities
  - iii. Time Frame
  - iv. Evaluation
  - v. Proposal Summary and Grant Request
- IV. Appendices
  - i. Project budget

## Notes

## Sample Needs Statement

The need for the Breast Cancer Prevention Project is great. The American Cancer Society estimates that 203,500 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to occur among women in the United States in 2002. Of that number, 5,345 will be in Every County. In comparison, of each state's 48 counties, the second highest incidence rate is projected to be in Big County, with 1,850 new cases. Similarly, Every County leads the state in deaths anticipated from breast cancer in 2002 (with 1,160), with Big County again a distant second (with 395 anticipated deaths).

Women who have breast cancer and who are employed may lose or need to leave their jobs or take significant amounts of time off for treatment, resulting in lack of a source of income. Or they may find their incomes drained by the costs of health care. They may also lose their health insurance, custody of their children, or their housing because of discrimination or periodic hospitalization.

Some women stay in abusive relationships to keep their insurance; even if a woman has access to coverage, many insurers will not cover a breast cancer survivor for up to ten years after recovery. Many of the women we serve have been diagnosed with Stage IV cancer, meaning that they do not have ten years, nor will they recover. The illness itself, plus weeks or months of treatment, often causes women to become fatigued, depressed, and malnourished. The need for preventive outreach and early detection is clearly great.

The groups targeted for outreach through this project are among the most under served women for health education services: women of color, homeless women, and lesbians, all of whom are low-income and aged 40 and over.

The causes of breast cancer are not fully known. Risk factors include heavy exposure to radiation, excessive alcohol consumption, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, stress, smoking, exposure to hormones, aging, family or personal history of breast cancer, and race. In addition, according to the Breast Cancer Fund, hundreds of scientific studies have drawn links between cancer and exposure to toxic chemicals found in the environment. Furthermore, scientists have identified two specific genes that are important in the development of breast cancer.

Women who are homeless do exhibit several of these risk factors because of their living situations, including alcohol and drug abuse, which is common. Lesbian women may receive inadequate health care because of poor treatment from providers who are uncomfortable with them. Immigrant women of color who do not speak English well may be afraid to seek health care if they are undocumented. For these reasons and more, the project is crucial to the women of this community.

If the project were not undertaken, low-income Port Beach—area women at risk for developing breast cancer would not be able to receive — in their own communities — health education and prevention services designed to minimize their risk. Since the women we serve are low-income, including some who are homeless, they have limited access to similar resources that may be available in other areas. The fact that SAK's House goes directly into shelters means that we reach women who would ordinarily not access health education services, those who are at highest risk for serious health problems.

*\*Reprinted from Winning Grants Step by Step, Third Edition, 2008, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

*Source: [http://nonprofit.about.com/od/foundationfundinggrants/a/needstatement\\_2.htm](http://nonprofit.about.com/od/foundationfundinggrants/a/needstatement_2.htm)*

# Notes

## **Attributes of goals vs. objectives**

### **Differences in scope**

Goals are broader than objectives in the sense that goals are general intentions and are not specific enough to be measured. Objectives are narrow and are set for certain tasks in particular.

### **Specificity**

Goals are general while objectives are specific. Goals are just general intentions towards the attainment of something while objectives are precise actions for accomplishment of a specific task.

### **Tangibility**

Goals may be intangible while objectives ought to be tangible. Goals may be directed at achieving non-measurable things while objectives may be targeted at getting measurable things or tasks.

### **Differences in time frame**

Both have a certain time frame. Goals usually have a longer time-frame than objectives. Objectives are usually precise targets set for a short term. Goals may be set for a longer term but many objectives may be set within that goal.

### **Measuring goals and objectives**

Goals may or may not be measured but in most cases objectives are measurable.

## **Other thoughts to consider**

- Tie your goals and objectives directly to your need statement.
- Include all relevant groups and individuals in your target population.
- Always allow plenty of time to accomplish the objectives.
- Do not confuse your outcome objectives for methods.
- Figure out how you will measure the change projected in each objective. If there is no way to measure an objective, it needs to be changed.
- Don't forget to budget for the evaluation (measurement) of your objectives.

*adapted from:  
[nonprofit.about.com](http://nonprofit.about.com) & [www.diffen.com](http://www.diffen.com)*

# Notes

## The Cover Letter

A cover letter is an opportunity to highlight the one or two most important and distinctive characteristics of your organization or project. It might highlight the promised impact, for instance. It also provides the opportunity to try to establish a close connection between your two organizations' interests or to acknowledge an existing close connection to the funder and express your gratitude for past investments.

Now that more and more proposals are submitted electronically, there are fewer opportunities to add this extra bit of personalization. The cover letter may also take the form of an e-mail to which the proposal, budget and other documents are attached.

---

## Possible Attachments

Remember only to include REQUESTED attachments. This list is comprehensive and represents a range of possible requested attachments you might see from funders. Typically, however, funders only require the first four items. Many will want a grants list and perhaps a list of major donors. Fewer funders will ask for an annual report or letters of support. It is important to include any required attachment. Do not include other

- 501(c)3 Letter from IRS
- Audit (or a copy of IRS Forms 990)
- Current Financial Statement
- List of Board of Directors
- List of Grants for this Project
- List of Major Donors
- Annual Report
- Brochures & Publications
- Newspaper clippings
- Letters of Support

attachments unless they are vital to your organization or proposal. Consider, though, that if they are vitally important, you should already have mentioned highlights from them in the proposal itself. For example, if you are a theater company, rather than attaching copies of all the excellent reviews for a production, your proposal should state that all the city's major newspapers gave the show positive reviews as did five (or some other number) of neighborhood weeklies, you were nominated for a Jeff award, etc. This information should be summarized and highlighted to show off your strengths rather than mentioned as an attachment.



# Notes

## **What's at stake:**

**Payment of pledge by this funder.**

**Future grants from this funder.**

**Your organization's reputation among the volunteer and grantmaking community.**

---

### **What to do:**

#### **1. Acknowledgement**

Say Thank You! Say it early, say it often.

#### **2. Fulfillment of Obligations**

Spend the money how you said you would.

It's your responsibility to make sure program is implemented.

#### **3. Reporting**

Keep a file of when reports are due.

Send a report even if one isn't requested.

#### **4. Recognition**

Do what you said you would.

Make sure it's agreed upon in proposal/grant agreement

Recognize the funder as the funder prefers to be recognized.

(Some foundations/funders prefer to remain anonymous)

#### **5. Cultivation**

Back to the beginning...move toward next solicitation.

When do you begin to position your organization for the next "ask"

# Notes

## Online Resources

### **Foundation Center**

[www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org)

National organization with free Internet resources as well as fee-based programs and foundation research directories. Includes links to free resources and tutorials for proposal writing and budgeting.

### **Forefront**

[www.myforefront.org](http://www.myforefront.org)

Founded in 1974, we are the nation's only statewide membership association for nonprofits, philanthropy, public agencies, advisors, and our allies. We provide education, advocacy, thought leadership, and project management to attract investment to the sector, develop top talent, improve systems and policies, and build organizational capacity.

### **Guidestar**

[www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)

Provides access to 990 tax returns of foundations and nonprofits. Useful for identifying similar projects and organizations funded by a particular foundation as well as for identifying appropriate request amounts based on similarly projects that have received funding.

### **Grant Space**

[www.grantspace.org](http://www.grantspace.org)

Provides multiple resources related to grantwriting including sample proposals and webinar training. A service of Foundation Center.

### **About.com (Nonprofit Charitable Organizations)**

[nonprofit.about.com](http://nonprofit.about.com)

Provides sample documents for several proposal components including needs statements, letters of inquiry, and thank you letters.

# Foundation Proposal Planning

---

## *Submission Worksheet*

What	By whom	By when	Notes
1. Review current funder guidelines			
2. Letter of intent			
3. Compile relevant materials from past proposals			
4. Compile information on past interactions with the funder, expectations set, etc.			
5. Outline project (goals, objectives, staffing)			
6. Prepare Preliminary Budget			
7. Statement of need or opportunity resources (data/articles)			
8. Draft proposal			
9. Review drafts (check for alignment with budget)			
10. Review feedback from partners, colleagues			
11. Revisions (likely final or nearly final version)			
12. Copy edit, check format requirements			
13. Produce final version for submission			
14. Proposal cover sheet (if req'd)			
15. Executive summary or abstract (if req'd)			
16. Cover letter (if req'd)			
17. Organization budget			
18. Project budget (if applicable)			
19. Organization financials, most recent fiscal year			
20. Organization financials, YTD (if applicable)			
21. List of past and/or current funding sources			Check funder guidelines for specific requirements
22. Board of directors list			Determine what information is required, may include employer, address and/or demographic info
23. Copy of 501c3 letter			Scan and retain as .pdf
24. Copy of most recent 990 or audit			Scan and retain as .pdf
25. Newsletters, programs, annual report			<b>Only</b> if requested by funder

## The Negotiated Ask

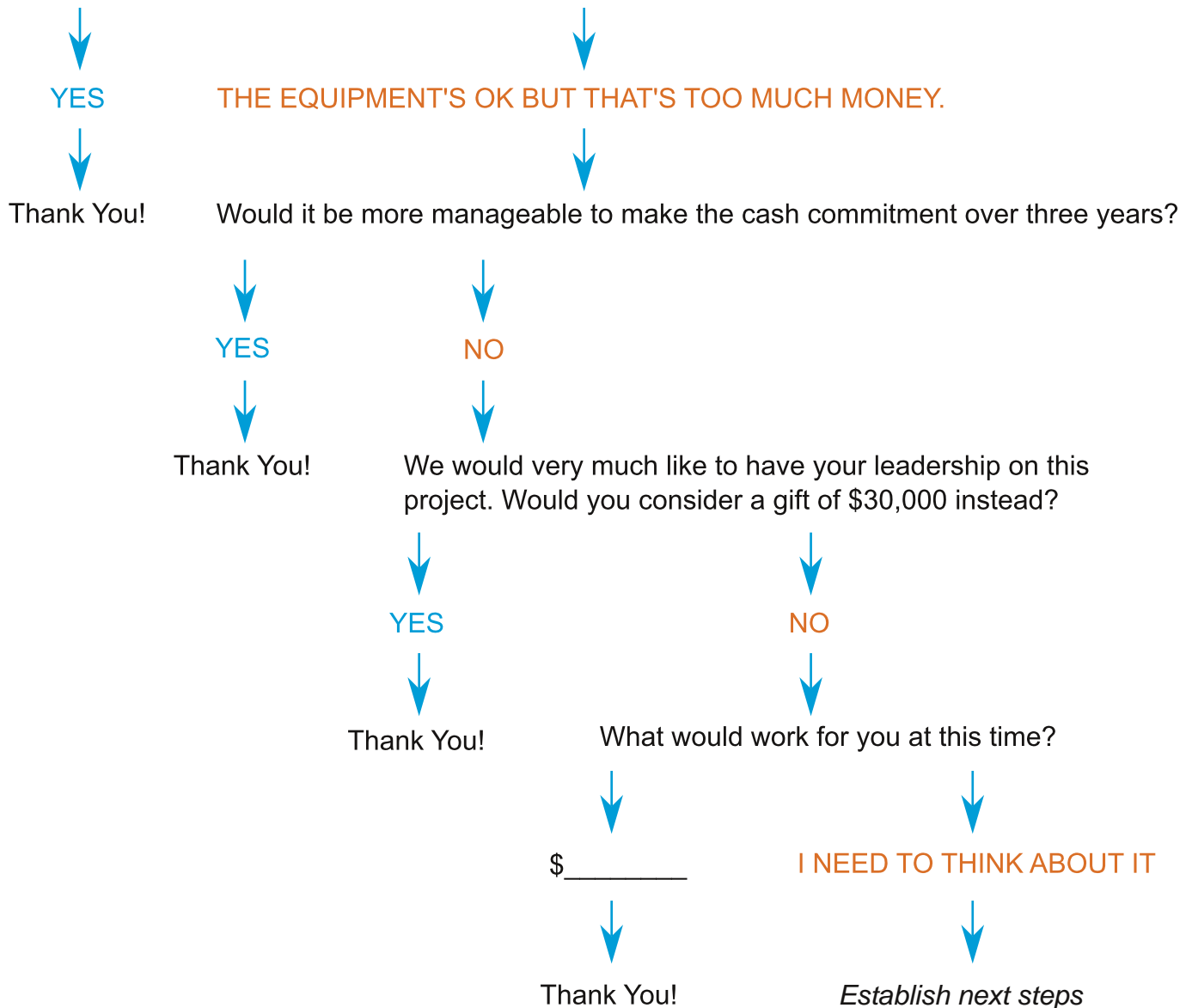
Prepare in advance for two fall-back positions - the first on timing,  
the second on the \$\$ amount.

Then, be prepared to negotiate

---

*For Example:*

We would like you, ABC Corporation to consider a commitment of \$50,000 to this project  
over two years and an additional commitment of 30 pieces of equipment.



## Active Verbs for Grantwriting

“The passive voice is convoluted; it takes the energy out of your writing and makes your message flaccid. It is absolutely homicidal - it kills the people in your prose. . . . The passive voice invariably comes across as pontificating, patronizing, talking down. It sounds insincere, even dishonest, and it makes the reader uncomfortable, not trusting, though usually the reader cannot put her finger on why.” -- [Henriette Anne Klauser, Writing on Both Sides of the Brain](#)

“Suitable verbs don't usually roll off the keyboard at the right time; they must be selected, more or less consciously, from a wide range of possibilities.” – [Peter Richardson, Style: A Pragmatic Approach](#)

For a powerful and energetic proposal, avoid passive verbs – was and were – that hide the agent of action. Avoid static verbs that lack movement: am, is, are, be, being, been, had, have, has, do, did, does, could, should, would. Replace overused verbs (get, went, put) with more precise active verbs.

---

achieve	decide	give	need	require
allow	define	help	observe	reveal
analyze	demonstrate	hinders	occur	review
announce	depend	identify	offer	sample
appeal	design	illuminate	operate	search
apply	develop	illustrate	organize	send
assemble	diagnose	implement	perform	show
assess	differ	include	plan	signal
assist	direct	indicate	portray	specify
balance	discuss	inform	prepare	start
become	distinguish	inspire	prevent	state
begin	educate	instruct	produce	suggest
believe	elevate	intend	prohibit	support
belong	engage	introduce	promote	survey
bring	ensure	invent	provide	synthesize
change	entail	invest	pursue	taught
choose	envision	investigate	realize	teach
clarify	equal	involve	receive	tend
coach	establish	know	recognize	test
combine	evaluate	lack	refine	translate
compare	excel	lead	reflect	try
compose	exemplify	learn	rely	understand
conclude	exhibit	maintain	remain	use
connect	experiment	make	remind	validate
constitute	explain	manage	report	verify
contain	extend	modify	research	wish
contrast	find	motivate	restore	work
coordinate	focus	move	result	write
creates	form	negotiate	return	wrote

# THANK YOU!

We appreciate you taking part in our workshop today. We sincerely hope you've gained some new knowledge to take back to your organization and hopefully have made some new contacts as well.

We are committed to bringing you the highest quality educational opportunities and value your feedback about today's workshop. Please take the time to complete a short survey about your experience here today. At the end of the survey, you will receive a link where you can download a copy of today's PowerPoint presentation.

Thanks for your help in improving this workshop.

- The Forefront Program Team

**SURVEY LINK:**  
**[www.surveymonkey.com/r/PW101FY16](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PW101FY16)**

Founded in 1974, we are the nation's only statewide membership association for nonprofits, philanthropy, public agencies, advisors, and our allies. We provide education, advocacy, thought leadership, and project management to attract investment to the sector, develop top talent, improve systems and policies, and build organizational capacity.

Together, our efforts help educate children, shelter the homeless, enrich the arts, and address a host of other critical issues to create healthier and more vibrant communities throughout Illinois.

Become a member by visiting <https://myforefront.org/join-movement>.